DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 398 382 CE 072 088

TITLE	California's Workforce Preparation System. Statement of Principles and Issues Paper.
INSTITUTION	Western Job Training Partnership Association, Sacramento, CA.
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	5p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Employment Programs; Federal Programs; *Job Training; Policy Formation; Postsecondary Education; *Program Design; Program Development; Program Implementation; Public Policy; *State Programs; *Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS	*California; *Western Job Training Partnership Association

ABSTRACT

The Western Job Training Partnership Association (WJTPA) supports the periodic evaluation of the scope and effectiveness of national, state, and local work force preparation and work force education programs. The WJTPA believes that future programs must correct the problems inherited from earlier work force preparation programs, such as the following: insufficient funding, political oversell, continued use of previous structures without considering relevance, continued use of previous programs without clear goals, duplication and competition among programs, no clear role for elected officials, funding of institutions first and services second, no incentives for cooperative linkages, and uneven use of performance measures for all aspects of work force and education systems. The WJTPA identifies the following issues as critical in the future design of a California Workforce Preparation system: establish workforce preparation as a fundamental stand-alone system, and establish connection with other initiatives; set priorities first and policies second; engage local officials and business leaders; rationalize the geography of local service; eliminate unfunded mandates for service; honor collaborative relationships that currently exist; combine authority and liability; take advantage of what has proven successful; give electronic access and personal contact equal weight; and increase funding by combining state and local efforts. (KC)

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CALIFORNIA'S WORKFORCE PREPARATION SYSTEM

Statement of Principles and Issues Paper

WESTERN JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

The WESTERN JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATION supports the periodic evaluation of the scope and effectiveness of national, state, and local workforce preparation and workforce education programs. This is important because times change...economies change...demographics change...and people change. Publicly-financed training and education programs must be adjusted to keep pace with the changes of their customers. This is how business must function, or it is no longer in business. Therefore, government must function in the same fashion.

The WESTERN JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATION believes that future programs must correct the problems inherited from earlier workforce preparation programs, including but not limited to these:

- Insufficient funding.
- Politically oversold.
- Continued use of previous structures/old vendors, without considering relevance.
- Continued use of previous programs that lacked clear goals.
- High volume participation levels and short-term goals.
- Needless duplication and competition among comparably funded programs.
- No clear role for elected officials, at both the state and local levels.
- Funding of institutions first, and services second.
- No incentives for cooperative linkages.
- Systems designed first to spend money and second to serve people.
- Weak or artificial private sector linkages, particularly in the small business sector.
- Weak economic development linkages.
- Weak school system and local job training system linkages.
- Absence of a focused workforce preparation strategy.
- Uneven use of performance measures for all aspects of workforce and education systems.

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KEY PRINCIPLES:

The WESTERN JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATION identifies the following issues as critical in the future design of a California Workforce Preparation system:

- Establish workforce preparation as a fundamental, stand-alone system. Establish the connection between workforce preparation with other initiatives such as welfare reform, economic development, school-to-careers, etc.
- Set priorities first. Establish policies second.
- Engage the chief local elected official.
- Engage local private business leaders.
- Rationalize the geography of local service.
- Eliminate unfunded mandates for service.
- Honor collaborative relationships that currently exist at the local level.
- Combine authority and liability.
- Take advantage of what has proven successful.
- Give electronic access and personal contact equal weight.
- Increase funding by combining funding streams and allowing collaborative decision-making at the state and local levels by those respective policymakers.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL WORKFORCE PREPARATION SYSTEM:

The WESTERN JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATION supports the following workforce preparation positions:

STATE ROLE

The role of the State of California should be to develop policy and guidance for local areas, in collaboration with same. The State should retain funds to support only minimal state-level needs. The State must demonstrate its number one priority--to fund services to customers--by funding the system from the bottom up, maximizing the amount of funds going to the local/client level.

LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

Defined as the 'highest ranking" elected body that is responsible for a unit of local general purpose government and its services. As discussed within this context, it is a county or municipal government and its elected body. The rationale for this position is the element of accountability that is carried by a county supervisor, city councilperson, or mayor who must stand for reelection by the combined populace of a jurisdiction which *universally* benefits from the services delivered by that government agency.

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS

The membership majority should be composed of private business leaders who live and work within the local workforce development areas. Non-business seats on these boards should be occupied by local education, labor, economic development, and other local public organization leaders. All members of these boards should be appointed by the Chief Local Elected Official, as defined earlier.

FISCAL AGENT

Local areas should be given both the authority and the responsibility for developing the local workforce preparation system. With that responsibility should go the role of fiscal agent to insure the proper

expenditure and safe-guarding of public funds allocated to that area. The chief local elected official (as defined earlier in this paper) shall serve as fiscal agent or may be given the authority to delegate and supervise that authority.

◗ GEOGRAPHY

Geographic size, upward or downward, is no guarantee of quality of service. It is not possible to say that the existing JTPA substate service delivery areas are too great or too small in number. The geographic size and population density must be considered *together* in determining substate delivery areas for workforce preparation in California. The other limiting factors would be the level of funding and the degree of flexibility granted in order to operate local programs. Any tendency to advocate a "one size fits all" approach must be strictly avoided.

◗ RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The substate delivery system should be revenue-neutral or return money to the taxpayers who finance employment training. Documented studies must be produced by the workforce preparation, education, and economic development players in the substate areas in order to measure the return-on-investment to the public trust.

◗ PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

In general, performance measures of the California Workforce Preparation System should stress *outcomes* not *process*. The general rule of thought should place *doing the right things* first, and then *doing things right* second, not the other way around. Return on investment of the public dollar should be measured in all programs.

Performance measures, in general, should relate directly to a four-part mission of the California Workforce Preparation System.

1. Ensuring skilled workers are available to California's employers.
2. Helping job seekers and the underemployed find work in California.
3. Fostering economic development in California.
4. Enabling California's workers and employers to compete successfully in the global economy.

◗ CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

California job seekers and job changers, whether youths or adults, and employers, are entitled to high quality services. Each entity providing services in the new Workforce Preparation System should have a readily recognizable identity that assures customers that they will receive a definable, high standard of service. Minimum quality criteria should include:

1. Access to comprehensive information.
2. Self-help environment supported by user-friendly technology.
3. Use of common definitions and goals.
4. Uniform outcomes:
   (a) Skill Outcomes (transferable skills and industry-specific occupational skills).
   (b) Customer Satisfaction Outcomes (based upon local research and data).
5. Ongoing evaluation of local needs.
6. Use of a common data base to share information across system components.
7. Use of continuous customer feedback for continuous improvement.
8. Use of a consumer "report card."
9. Ensure skills attainment.

◗ VOUCHERS

Voucher usage (or non-usage) must not be mandated by the State of California. The role of the State should be to establish priorities and policies for voucher usage in California, with expansive input by local workforce development boards and their staff.

In evaluating the appropriateness of vouchers, boards should consider the quantity and nature of local vendors, resources available, individual customer needs and interests. In addition, the manner in which the vouchers are administered, i.e., management account system, free-market based, or a combination of both methods, should also be determined by the local boards.

◗ WAIVERS

The State of California should maintain an ongoing process for applications by local workforce development boards to secure policy waivers for the purpose of innovative approaches and techniques that will benefit the local workforce delivery system and its residents. Both the application process and the approval process should be streamlined in order to encourage new and effective services.

◗ SYSTEM WIDE CAPACITY BUILDING

The California Workforce Preparation System should include a process whereby the best practices and results in the system can be shared with and taught to other components of the system. The role of the State should be to finance the process for replication of best practices. The role of the local workforce development boards should be to operate the process for replication of best practices among their peers and partners.

◗ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Workforce preparation and economic development must be planned and delivered as a unified package of services at the local level, under the supervision of the local workforce development boards and local elected officials. The State should reward such arrangements with special funding "bonuses" designed to further enhance program expansion and job creation.

◗ LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

Labor market information must be used to identify and validate labor market demand and supply. Training should be guided in order to focus it into the demand areas. The local workforce development boards should oversee the production of data for employment demand and available training resources to prepare the workforce.

State and regional labor market information should be used by local workforce development boards as the broader context for training design and delivery. But locally-obtained labor market information must be used as the primary source of direction.

◗ DATA AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

The Governor and Legislature must order an interagency review of all data elements that relate to workforce development and preparation programs. From this review, common definitions and reporting elements must be developed. As such, the California system and the results it generates can be adequately measured. Additionally, the costs of collecting, compiling, sorting, and evaluating data will be substantially reduced while producing the information in a more timely fashion.